and placed before the eyes of zealous students, both in verse & prose.[4] But wishing to embellish our French tongue a little, and to the end that the common people may make use of it, together with those who are well versed in letters, I choose to write in French. I am sure that soon some envious backbiter will appear, who will say that I aim to play the part of a new author, and will exert himself to decry my instruction and teachings. But I know from the ancient poets and philosophers that Momus was a knave who could never do aught but deride; as when he derided the sandals & robe of Venus, saying that there were too many sparkling and jingling spangles on it, and that they made over-much noise. In like manner he derided Dame Nature, for that she had placed the horns on the head of oxen and cows rather than on the shoulder, that they might strike with them more fiercely. He derided also the bull of Neptune, the house of Minerva, & the man of Vulcan; but chiefly this said man because Vulcan had made neither window nor wicket in his stomach, so that through these one might know what he was thinking and resolving in his said stomach, which is full of concave places & convolutions. Of this said Momus you can read in Proverb CCCLXXIIII of the first Chiliad of Erasmus, and in a book written by Leon Baptiste Albert, entitled *Momus*.[5]

I Shall say nothing in this work which I do not prove by authors worthy of faith, and by demonstrations as natural as they are manifest in Geometry; as may be seen from the figures hereinafter drawn by the compass & rule, which are tools of great certainty in measuring truly. I Shall not be derided by Momus alone, but by three sorts of men, namely, the unlearned, the half-learned, and the much-learned. The unlearned will snap at me like poor ignoramuses, since learning has no enemy save ignorance. The half-learned also will defame me, not understanding what I shall say. Nor will the much-learned spare me, wishing & thinking to acquire renown by rebuking & correcting my errors, if there be any; and if perchance there be none, they will declare that a sheep has five feet instead of four, saying that a tail a foot long is as good as another foot, but as Erasmus says in his proverb CLXXXII, *Carpet hæc citius aliquis quam imitabitur* (they will reprove me rather than resemble me). Against these evil speakers I will quote a fine ancient motto; and will say Λεγουσιν α θελουσιν, λεγετωσαν ου μελει μοι, *Dicunt quæ volunt, dicant non est curæ mihi*. That is, they may say what they will, I care not. *Susque deque fero*.* Whatever they may say, I shall

* *An idiomatic phrase expressing indifference.*

not cease to write in French, like a Frenchman, reminding them that Vitruvius of old was reproved and derided because, not being a Greek by birth, he wrote in Greek, as can still be seen in the greater number of the terms and tools and other things relating to architecture which he mentioned in his book.[6]

IN giving instruction how to make the Attic Letters aforesaid, I shall devote myself, with our Lord's assistance, to setting forth, in their accustomed order, one after another, the qualities of each one according to the rules of grammar. I can see lying in ambush someone who would gladly find fault, and would strive to injure me if he could, or if he dared, but who, fearing lest, if he should show himself, I should instantly put him to silence by piercing his tongue with my trustworthy compass, and beating him with my unerring rule, will hold his peace, methinks.

I Shall write, then, in French, in my own poor fashion and mother-tongue, and shall not fail, albeit I come of lowly & humble forbears and am poor in paltry goods, to give pleasure to the devoted lovers of well-made letters. I know that it is said in the ancient proverb mentioned by Erasmus in Proverb DXVIII of his first Chiliad, that *sæpe est etiam olitor valde opportuna locutus*,* and that Pliny said: *Nullum esse librum tam malum, vt non aliqua parte prodesse queat*: There is no book so bad that it may not be good for something. And thereupon I dare to say that, with the aid of God and of this book, you will be able to make and draw the Attic Letter in its proper proportions, as small or as large as you may choose, in so far as the compass and the rule can do their work.

* *Often a kitchen gardener has said the aptest things.*

HErein, perchance, I shall appear a new sort of man, because no one has yet been known to teach by writing, in the French tongue, the form & qualities of letters; but, wishing to enrich our language in some degree, I am content to be the first humble index finger to point the way to some noble mind who shall strive the harder, as did the Greeks and Romans of old, to establish and order the French tongue by fixed rules for pronouncing and speaking properly. Would God that some noble lord might bethink himself to offer rewards and handsome presents to those who could do this well.

IT is true that the style of Parliament and the speech of the Court are excellent; but even so, our language might well be enriched by certain fine figures & flowers of rhetoric, both in prose and otherwise.

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